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SOURCE Chung-kuo Nung-pao, No 19, 1952.AGRICULTURAL TECHNICAL STATIONS IN NORTHEAST CHINA

Summary: In Northeast China great progress has been made in the use of new-type horse-drawn agricultural equipment, and the prediction is made that within 5 years 170,000 sets of these will be used. Many methods were tried before it was realized that technical skill must be given to the farmers themselves before success can be assured. Many technical stations have been established and many mutual-aid teams organized to implement the use of the new type horse-drawn agricultural equipment.

The Agricultural Production Office of the Northeast Department of Agriculture has surveyed the experience of the Northeast Administrative Area in the use of new-type horse-drawn equipment. It was found that several methods of popularizing the use of such machines have been tried, with varied results.

One method was to loan the machines directly to the better model worker teams, but without technical experts. In the past, this was the most widely practised method and was a failure. The farmers were not skillful enough to use the machines effectively.

A second method was to establish technical stations, with mechanics to give direct guidance. This plan was carried out in various ways. One way was to have the technical expert travel around the area giving instruction. This was done in Heilungkiang in 1950, but with poor results. The experts were not sufficiently devoted to their tasks and their instructions were not such as to prove the effectiveness of the machines.

Another method was to do the plowing for the farmers, charging for the service. This method was used in 1951 in Liaosi when two plowing stations were set up. Full provision was made, with cadres, machines, and draught animals; but the farmers showed little interest and the technical experts and the draught animals were left idle.

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A much more successful method was the one in which a special man was appointed to give technical instruction to the farmers in groups and the new equipment then loaned to the farmers. In this way the equipment proved effective and soon the people were clamoring for chances to use it.

This resulted in a large increase in the number of farm-equipment mutual-aid teams organized and in the number of new horse-drawn agricultural equipment used. In 1951, under the Chi Hsien agricultural technical station, the number of teams increased from one to 18 and in the present year [1952] has further increased to 71 teams, using 75 new pieces of horse-drawn agricultural equipment. If, in 1953, 274 pieces of equipment are obtained one-third of the acreage of the hsien will be using the new equipment.

A similar increase took place in the Hai-lun area, where last year only a single village had four new mutual aid teams organized to implement the use of new-type horse-drawn equipment while this year [1952] seven villages, with 11 mutual-aid teams employ 11 sets of new machines.

These accomplishments have awakened a general faith in the value of the agricultural technical stations so that there has been a rapid increase to 51 stations, each averaging eight pieces of horse-drawn equipment. In the last 3 years, the amount has increased to more than 600 sets. The largest number of technical stations is found in Heilungkiang Province which has 36. Sungkiang Province has five and Kirin Province four, while Liaotung has only two.

In 1953, throughout the Northeast the agricultural technical stations are to increase to more than 300. Within 5 years there will be several thousand such stations, instructing farmers in the use of 170,000 sets of new-style horse-drawn agricultural equipment.

In most of the villages, under the tutelage of the technical stations, new harvest records were made. This revised the ideas of some farmers who had thought of the new machines as merely "labor saving" or "only good for the first plowing of uncultivated fields and not for planting cultivated fields." For example, the Kao-k'an agricultural production cooperative, using the new equipment, planted 40 mou [one mou equals 1/6 acre] of wheat and harvested an average of 355 catties per mou which was 2.3 times the average for that locality. Seven mou of the 40 had exceptionally fine yield, averaging 504 catties per mou.

Another fruit of the technical station was enlargement of the size of the mutual-aid teams. The small teams usually increased to large teams and then the large teams became agricultural production cooperatives.

An important outcome of operating the technical stations was the training of farmers in technical skills. Experience proved that only as technical skill is taught directly to the farmers will such skills really be effective. During the spring of 1952, only seven of the technical stations trained 386 people in the use of the new machines, as well as instructing them in seed selection and in the use of disinfectants.

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